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Aruba Tourism Summit will focus on Aruba's Strategic Plan

Myrna Jansen, former Director of the Aruba Tourism Authority and currently Adviser on Tourism to the Ministry of Tourism, reported on the upcoming Tourism Summit scheduled for December 8 and 9.

According to Jansen, the primary objective of this Summit is to reveal the strategic plan for the development of Aruba's tourism for the year 2012 and onward. Keynote speaker at this event

will be Aruba's Minister of Tourism, Otmar Oduber. Following his speech Aruban University Professor and former Minister of Tourism, Dr. Robertico Croes, will present the all-important Strategic Plan. Dr. Croes was charged via the University of Central

Florida to develop the plan together with more than 100 stakeholders on Aruba.

Myrna Jansen further disclosed that there will be several other important speakers at the Summit.

Continue on pg 2

Cain may announce 2012 decision Saturday: reports



Cain with wife Gloria

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Embattled Republican White House hopeful Herman Cain meets supporters today and could indicate whether he will continue his campaign amid a series of sex scandal allegations, reports said.

Cain, 65, is officially scheduled to open his Georgia headquarters in Atlanta, and the Washington Post said the former pizza executive will give supporters advance word of whether he intends to continue his race.

The daily, which quoted sources close to the campaign, reported Friday that one supporter summoned to the private session said he believes Cain will withdraw from the race. But another source told the Post Cain had made no decision.

Cain, once the front-runner to take on Democrat President Barack Obama in the November 2012 elections, has denied a series of allegations, including the latest from Ginger White, who says they had a 13-year affair which ended only a few months ago.

Fox News reported Cain would make a "major announcement" Saturday but offered no details. The candidate told Fox earlier the latest allegations were false, but that he would meet with his wife, Gloria, to discuss the situation.

"Many of my supporters, the response has been overwhelmingly positive that they are behind me, but I've got to consider family considerations first," Cain told the TV network.

France, Germany in push for 'fiscal union' to save euro

BERLIN (AFP) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel kicked off a key week of talks on saving the euro by laying out a vision Friday for European "fiscal union", as French and British leaders met ahead of a pivotal EU summit.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron held talks in Paris amid a diplomatic frenzy as EU leaders prepare for next Friday's summit that is set to shape the bloc's future.

In an eagerly awaited speech in the German parliament, Merkel said the stakes could hardly be higher, warning that the future of the euro was "indivisibly linked to the unification of Europe".

Cameron, whose country is not part of the 17-nation eurozone, seemed resigned to the treaty change that Paris and Berlin say is vital to solve the crisis, but warned he would use any tinkering to bring power back to London.

"If there is treaty change, then I will make sure that we further protect and enhance Britain's interests," he said after a working lunch with Sarkozy.

Earlier Friday, Merkel set out her vision for solving the eurozone debt crisis that has threatened to tip Europe, and the rest of the world, into a deep recession and has pushed the eurozone to the brink of collapse.

Continue on pg 11

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Aruba Tourism Summit will focus on Aruba's Strategic Plan

Continued from pg 1



Myrna Jansen

One of these speakers will be Carlos Vogeler, regional director of the Americas for the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Vogeler will speak about the future of tourism in general, and on what effects this will have on Aruba. He will indicate how Aruba should safeguard her future for the coming decades and what key factors Aruba should reckon with.

Tilburg professor, Greg Richards, who teaches Innovation and Creativity in

Tourism, will also address the Summit. The last speaker at this Summit will be Route Planner for JetBlue Airlines, John Cheketts. JetBlue is currently the airline responsible for bringing the largest amount of tourists to Aruba.

John Cheketts will speak about all the perspectives of the Caribbean and Aruba, and how Aruba can benefit from these perspectives.

At the Summit there will also be a panel of various members who will also offer commentary, raise questions and answer questions. Obviously, the general public of invited local and international persons will be able to interact with the panel.

Myrna Jansen indicated that in the afternoon of December 9th there will be a few interesting workshops that will focus on three particular themes.

The first theme will be Satisfaction on the Job and the

Quality of Life, the second workshop, which will be conducted simultaneously, will be dealing with the Technology in Tourism. This workshop will address, specifically, how to apply technology to promote tourism or to make the tourism product more attractive.

The third workshop will address the matter of the development of the tourism product. The Adviser to the Ministry of Tourism encourages everyone to attend and participate in these workshops. Your ideas and thoughts on how to apply the information presented will be most valuable. The primary objective of the Tourism Summit will be to present the Strategic Plan for Aruba's Tourism. The Ministry of Tourism is contemplating planning a yearly Tourism Summit for Aruba.

Take advantage of great deals this Sunday at Digicel's Fair in San Nicolas



This Sunday Digicel phone company is organizing from 2 to 6 p.m. a tremendous fair at their store in San Nicolas.

The kids will be visited by Zwarte Piet and Sinterklaas, there will be cotton candy, Dino Jump, face painting, free popcorn and much more, a day that will surely be enjoyed.

Digicel has not forgotten the adults, there will be tremendous phone offers for post-paid and pre-paid clients.

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away to all clients of Digicel will also receive 100 SMS from Digi to Digi and also free minutes for International and local calls, including call between Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. During the closing of this campaign the Big winner of Afl. 50.000 CASH will also receive their prize.

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ASTEC Breaks their silence on the Public Tender of APA

In recent days many questions have been circulating regarding the Public Tender process and the move of the wharf activities in Oranjestad to Barcadera.

In the Public Tender, Aruba Ports Authority determined that the operator of Barcadera will have to invest somewhere close to 70 million Florins in the infrastructure at Barcadera, excluding the necessary investment in equipment.

With respect to the arbitrary case that APA levied to cancel the long lease contract

they had with ASTEC, the judge decided that APA cannot cancel that contract, at least not without changing, substantially, the task of a future operator. The change must entail large investments such as described above and the selection of an operator must occur through a Public Tender process with ASTEC having the right to also participate in said Public Tender.



To the stunning surprise of APA and ASTEC; of the 15 interested parties, only ASTEC took the time, made the expenses, placed a 500 thousand dollar guarantee as

the only bidder to win the Public Tender.

According to ASTEC, this means that they will invest approximately 78 million Florins.

Apparently, ASTEC complies in every aspect with all the requirements of the public bid.

ASTEC was of the opinion that this would have granted them the contract as operator, or at least, that APA would have invited them to the bargaining table to nego-

tiate whatever modifications, which is a customary procedure in any public bidding.

But to their amazement, APA did not want to sit at the table with ASTEC and instead declared officially that the process of the Public Tender had ended without APA having received an acceptable offer, according to them.

In any case, ASTEC has indicated that they will maintain their offer and is fully prepared to assume their part in the move from the Oranjestad wharf to Barcadera.

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Don't spend a fortune on a puppy for the kids, when so many need a good home-and are free!



Holidays are here!! Now is a time many parents consider a new member to the family as a holiday gift for the children, which is all well and good, as long as the children are well educated to understand this is not simply a toy to be discarded when it is no longer tiny and cute.

Families can go out and spend an extravagant amount of money for a purebred, or get with the program and adopt one of the sixteen adorable puppies now needing a home which have recently been "dropped on the doorstep" at Cas Animal Foundation. Kiki

Arndt, founder, has been rescuing stray and abandoned dogs on Aruba for 14 years and right now she has a bumper crop of baby canines eager to deliver a bundle of love to some lucky household. All have had at least their first vaccinations; some have already been treated for some of the many diseases the can afflict malnourished puppies, and so are now immune, healthy and playful.

Holiday time is also a time to give thanks, and Kiki particularly cares to thank her partners in rescuing those sad creatures which others have abandoned or abused. These are the veterinary clinics of Contreras, which has been a

steadfast supporter for years, and their protégé, Natalie Booi, who opened her own Animal Care Clinic in Paradera a couple of years ago.

It takes a great deal of patience and heart to join in the often extensive treatment needed to save some dogs, particularly those who have been hit by cars, or have extreme degrees of tick fever; however, as Kiki has proved over and over again, they can be rehabilitated and live happy lives for years after. Kiki is well aware, in her

constant efforts to find her abandoned charges good homes, most of the older dogs will not be appealing to potential adopters, so she cares for over 80 in her home and is working hard to raise the funds for Aruba's

first, proper, no-kill refuge

Kiki acknowledges she could not fulfill what has become her mission in life, without the spirit of these humane veterinarians, who fight alongside her to save a dog that has no owner, with the hope they will eventually find it a loving home. Presently she has a number of healthy puppies that would make wonderful holiday gifts to children who will be taught properly how to care for and raise a canine com-

panion to be a devoted, life long friend who will not be abandoned when it is no longer convenient to care for.

Those interested in adopting a puppy or one of the more than 100 stray or abandoned older dogs in Kiki's care can do so by calling her at 565-2130 or 742-8732. You can also report an animal in need of assistance, as she maintains an Animal Ambulance to rescue them. Her expenses for feeding all the animals she has taken in are astronomical, as well as her veterinary bills. you can help by paying on her account at the Contreras Clinics in Shaba or Savaneta, or to Animal Care Clinic, phone number 582-8382, as well as directly to the bank account of Cas Animal Foundation, CMB Bank account # 25762110. If you are not an island resident and wish to adopt a dog, Kiki will assist you in the process, as it is much easier to return to the U.S. with an Aruban dog than you might think, and any would be examined and certified by a qualified vet to pass quarantine standards.

Rosalie Klein



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Hong Kong tycoon's ex-wife wins huge divorce payout

HONG KONG (AFP) - A Hong Kong heir to a property fortune has been ordered to pay his ex-wife more than US\$150 million in one of the city's biggest divorce settlements, reports said Friday.

High Court Justice John Saunders ruled that billionaire tycoon Samathur Li must pay Florence Tsang, his wife of eight years, HK\$1.22 billion (US\$157 million), media reports said.

Saunders said the couple lived a "lifestyle which was best described as just below that of a US-dollar billionaire", and ruled that Tsang, a 38-year-old solicitor, should be kept in the comfort to which she had become accustomed.

The settlement represented 20 percent of the couple's assets, less than the 55 percent demanded by Tsang, according to the Hong Kong Standard daily.

Tsang reacted with a "cheer and a broad smile" when she read the decision, the South China Morning Post reported.

The ruling included a Hong Kong property worth HK\$250 million, a London property valued at HK\$30.53 million, HK\$3.5 million for cars, HK\$5 million for a yacht and HK\$4.6 million for club memberships in Hong Kong and Britain.

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Hurry Up, Deposit your Tickets Island Extravaganza Coming to an Exciting End

Thousands of tickets deposited in the tombolas at the Renaissance Mall and Renaissance Marketplace will be raffled when the eight-week long campaign titled Shop, Dine, Play and Win, will be coming to a happy ending today, with the conclusion of Island Extravaganza.

The Mall, The Marketplace, including all shops, all restaurants, the Crystal Casino and the Seaport Casino proudly participated in the year-end activity which has already become a tradition on Aruba, and at the same time at the Renaissance Mall & Rif Fort in Curacao.

On December 3rd, the MG6 Fastback car will find new owners and the 7 days cruise, the trip to Miami for two, and the trip to Curacao for two, will be won and en-



joyed, along many other spectacular gifts.

The marketing team of the Renaissance hosted a congenial press conference this week, urging all Aruban residents and guests to bring in

those receipts to the hostess's desk in the mall, fill out their raffle tickets, and make sure they too are included when the tombola spins, in the presence of the notary, this coming Saturday, at 9 pm, on

stage at the Renaissance Marketplace followed by a fireworks show.

The grand finale on Saturday will feature a twelve-hour party with Steel Band, Clowns, a Trunk Fashion Show, Wine Tasting and Live Entertainment with Click from 10 am to 7 pm at the Renaissance Mall and Dino Jump, Trampoline and Bungee Jumps for kids just across the street at the Renaissance Marketplace.

Also at the Renaissance Marketplace, an attractive food festival with many offers all day, also visited by Sinterklaas and his Black Piet helpers.

The day will culminate

with a musical marathon with two legendary bands, the Rincon Boyz and Double R, brought in especially from Curacao, before the raffle takes place. All winners should be present during the raffle to claim their prizes and present the team with a valid ID.

Don't miss an exciting Saturday at the Renaissance downtown, free bus transportation from the hotels is offered, visitors are asked to kindly contact the concierge at their hotel for more information. Pictured here the marketing team, the amazing car, the hostess at the mall, the tombola and a happy client filling out tickets!

You may also call tel.: 583 6000, and ask for the Renaissance concierge.

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

Donald Trump to moderate Republican debate



WASHINGTON (AFP) - Real estate mogul and reality television star Donald Trump said Friday he is teaming up with a conservative media outlet to moderate a Republican presidential debate on December 27.

Trump, who briefly flirted with his own Republican presidential run earlier this year, will be moderating the debate hosted by magazine and news website Newsmax just a week before the January 3 Iowa caucuses that officially kick off the 2012

voting season.

"I think I have a lot of good questions to ask. I feel very strongly about the country. We'll see how it turns out," Trump told MSNBC television, saying he was asked to serve as moderator by some of his friends who are "strong Republicans."

"I am not bought by somebody. From my standpoint, I care about one thing, that our country comes back and our country is great again. I think we'll have an interesting debate."

Though he has criticized the current Republican field as weak, Trump said he would "probably" be endorsing a candidate shortly after the debate.

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich is currently leading the field of Republican hopefuls battling to win the party's nomination and take on Democrat President Barack Obama in the November 2012 elections. Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney is running second.

Record turnout in Egypt vote but results delayed

CAIRO (AFP) - Egypt said on Friday the country's first post-revolution election had seen a record turnout but it again delayed the release of full results expected to show Islamist candidates sweep to victory.

At a press conference by the election commission chief Abdel Moez Ibrahim, already pushed back by two days, he began announcing figures before abruptly leaving the room saying he had "no more energy" and had "run out of gas."

His incomplete announcement of results in some constituencies made it difficult to discern the overall trend, but he did reveal that turnout had been a record "since the

Pharaohs" at 62 percent.

More than eight million Egyptians embraced their new democratic freedoms this week in Cairo and second-city Alexandria in the first election since the toppling of the 30-year rule of president Mubarak.

The results are expected to show the Muslim Brotherhood, a moderate Islamist movement banned for decades, as the dominant force, but with a strong showing by hardline Salafi candidates.

There was no immediate announcement of when full results would be revealed, but Ibrahim said they would be posted on the Internet.

Criticism of US dominates New Americas summit

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela's Hugo Chavez opened a summit Friday for a new Americas bloc that excludes Washington and which Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega called a "death sentence" to US interference in Latin America.

Latin American and Caribbean leaders gathered at a military fort for the two-day meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), an alliance of 33 countries that excludes the United States and Canada.

More than 10,000 security forces are ensuring safety of the summitters in Caracas, one of the region's most dangerous cities.

"For the first time, we will have an organization for our America. And if it works, if it's successful, it can be considered the biggest event in our 200 years of semi-independence," Cuban President Raul Castro said.

The leaders were invited by Chavez, a firebrand leftist and long a thorn in Washington's side, for his first big international event since being diagnosed with cancer.

CELAC should be a "political union to build a large power center of the 21st century," the Venezuelan president said on the eve of the summit, pointing to strong regional growth, with many countries developing closer ties with Asia or Europe and reducing their traditional reliance on the United States.

Ortega, a strong Chavez ally, said meanwhile the birth of the new group represented a "death sentence" for the Monroe Doctrine, referring to the 1823 declaration by US president James Monroe which helped establish US power in the region.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mark Toner the United States would obviously continue "to

work through the OAS as the preeminent multilateral organization, speaking for the hemisphere."

But another State Department spokesman, William Ostick, said the new organization could be a partner for Washington as well.

"The United States interacts with subregional multilateral groups as an important part of helping to constructively solve problems and engage with key actors in the region," he said.

The summit comes as many countries celebrate 200 years of independence and a month after an Ibero-American summit in Paraguay -- including former regional colonizers Spain and Portugal.

But questions remain about the role the fledgling grouping will play in the diverse region, in the shadow of the current crisis in the European Union.

On Thursday, foreign ministers adopted a democracy clause in CELAC bylaws, although there was no consensus on how the group would conduct its decision-making progress.

"It provides that if a country violates a democratic order, we would open consul-

tations and the country could be suspended" from CELAC, said Antonio Jose Ferreira Simoes, Brazil's vice-minister for South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

He said Brazil favored a decision-making process based on consensus.

The foreign ministers also approved statements on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, nuclear weapons, food security and terror, according to Simoes. Leaders are expected to review and discuss these documents Friday and Saturday.

Regional leaders proposed the new grouping in February 2010 in Mexico, more than 60 years after the start of the Organization of American States, which is based in Washington and from which excludes communist Cuba.

Chavez dismissed the "old and worn-out" OAS, suggesting CELAC would eventually take its place.

OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza acknowledged CELAC would be a "natural match" for the regional organization, and expressed hope that the new group would "enhance inter-American dialogue."



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Israel under fire for 'don't marry a US Jew' ad campaign

CHICAGO (AFP) - The Israeli government is facing an unusual backlash from major US Jewish organizations after launching an advertising campaign essentially urging Israeli ex-pats not to marry clueless American Jews or raise their children in the United States.

One of the ads shows a young Israeli woman wincing after her boyfriend mistakes candles and music marking Yom HaZikaron, Israel's memorial day, for a romantic night in.

The words "They will always remain Israelis. Their partners won't always understand what that means. Help them return to Israel" are read by a somber narrator and scrolled across the screen.

The Jewish Federations of North America sent a letter of protest to the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption: "We fear this campaign will only backfire, and rather than simply bringing Israelis back, will alienate and divide Diaspora Jews from Israel," wrote the umbrella group which represents 157 Jewish federations and over 300 network communities.

The ministry defended the decision to launch a campaign "touching the fine nerves of Israelis and their identity."

The recent claims, according to which the Israeli government is attempting to intervene in the personal choices of US Jews or to discount their lifestyle, has no connection to reality," the ministry said.

"The Immigration Absorption Ministry cherishes and values the Jewish community in the US, and acknowledges its strong bond with Israel. The ministry respects the right of each individual to their personal choices, and does not consider them its business."



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Health & Living

Anti-psychotic drugs over-prescribed to US elderly

WASHINGTON (AFP) - In the United States, elderly patients with dementia are too often prescribed anti-psychotic drugs to calm their disruptive behavior, a costly and risky practice that should end, experts said warned.

Instead, more care should be taken to determine why dementia patients may be acting up and treat those underlying causes, lawmakers were told at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Aging.

Daniel Levinson, Health and Human Services Inspector General said recent government audits have raised concerns about the use of antipsychotics by elderly people with dementia in nursing homes.

One audit showed 14 percent of nursing home residents had Medicare claims for antipsychotic drugs, he said.

"Facilities reported they gave antipsychotic drugs to many residents who did not have a psychosis, including 40 percent of patients at high risk

because of behavior issues."

Edelman also pointed out that this issue is far from new, and that the same Senate committee had issued a report on the misuse of drugs in nursing homes back in 1975, and held a workshop on the topic two decades ago.

The practice persists, even though it is against federal law, because of serious understaffing in nursing facilities, high turnover of staff, and "aggressive off-label marketing of anti-psychotic drugs," she said.

According to Tom Hlavacek, executive director at Alzheimer's Association's southeastern Wisconsin chapter, elderly people with dementia are sometimes prescribed these potent drugs for behaviors that have other causes.

Urinary tract infections, tooth decay, arthritic pain, or simply moving a patient from one place to another can lead to agitated behaviors.

"Our experience indicates that these care transitions can

exacerbate behaviors and often lead to escalating drug treatments," he told lawmakers.

Experts said solutions could include creating stronger penalties for inappropriate prescribing, and a renewed focus on trying non-pharmacological approaches to a problem first.

"Most doctors treat unwelcome behavior in all settings as a disease that requires medication. These drugs are used as chemical restraints," said Jonathan Evans, a doctor who specializes in caring for frail elders.

"Behavior is not a disease. Behavior is communication. And in people who have lost the ability to communicate with words, the only way to communicate is through behavior," he added.

"Good care demands we figure out what they are telling us and help them."

Health Tip: Alcohol Can Interact With Medications

-- Over-the-counter medications may seem safer because they don't require a prescription. But they can still interact badly when alcohol enters the mix.

The American Academy of Family Physicians mentions these popular medications that may have adverse effects if mixed with alcohol:

- NSAID pain relievers, which may lead to gastrointestinal bleeding if taken while consuming as few as two alcoholic drink per week.

- Acetaminophen, which may cause liver damage when taken with alcohol.

- Some OTC antihistamines can make you drowsy when taken with alcohol.

- Decongestants and cough medications that contain the cough suppressant dextromethorphan can increase drowsiness when taken with alcohol.

- Herbal supplements, such as kava kava, St. John's wort or valerian root, may increase drowsiness if taken with alcohol.



WHO warns of measles spread in Europe

(AFP) - The World Health Organization on Friday warned that Europe faces an explosion of measles cases next year unless it takes urgent steps to contain the viral respiratory disease.

In the first nine months of 2011, 36 Western European nations reported a total of 26,000 measles cases, including more than 14,000 in France alone, according to the WHO's latest data.

There were nine deaths, six in France, as well as 7,288 hospitalizations.

Measles -- a contagious illness characterized by high fever and the eruption of small red spots -- is particularly virulent in Europe from February to May.

Outside Europe, the WHO said, measles had also spread

in Democratic Republic of Congo, with more than 100,000 cases, as well as in Nigeria and Somalia, with more than 15,000 cases each.

In Europe, 90 percent of cases affected adolescents and adults who had not been vaccinated or had failed to receive follow-up vaccinations.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a similar warning on Thursday in which it said the European rise in measles began in late 2009, after six years of decline.

In order to reach global health targets of eliminating measles by 2015, the CDC recommended that vaccinations cover 95 percent of the population with two doses of measles-containing vaccine.



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Sci-Tech

Samsung tablet ban extended in Australia



The Galaxy Tab 10.1

SYDNEY (AFP) - Australia's High Court Friday extended a ban on selling Samsung's Galaxy 10.1 tablet for at least another week, despite a lower court allowing the device to compete in stores with Apple's iPad.

The Australian case is one of several patent tussles going on around the world between Samsung and Apple as they seek to dominate the US\$100 billion market for tablet computers and smartphones.

The Federal Court in Syd-

ney Wednesday lifted a temporary ban on the sale of the Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1, pending a full hearing into whether the device copies the iPad.

But Apple immediately won a stay of orders and requested the High Court prolong the injunction.

A spokeswoman for the High Court said Justice Dyson Heydon had expedited the matter into the special leave list in Sydney set for next Friday.

"He also extended the stay -- which prevents Samsung from selling its Galaxy tablet - until the determination of the application for special leave to appeal," she said.

The South Korean electronics giant has previously said, through its Australian lawyer, that any extension of the ban "simply serves to prolong the injustice suffered by Samsung".

But Apple claims the Galaxy Tab 10.1, which has not yet been sold in Australia, infringes 13 of its patents.

The temporary injunction was initially granted in October on a finding that Apple had established a prima facie case that the device breached two patents related to touchscreen technology.

It was overturned by a full bench federal court which noted that further delaying the sale of the Galaxy would effectively "kill off" the device.

The date for the full hearing has not been set.

Samsung and Apple are engaged in an ongoing battle over smartphone and tablet technology in the United States, Japan and South Korea. Apple recently won a ban on the Galaxy Tab 10.1 in Germany related to copyright breaches.

'Record-setting' change in warming Arctic: report

WASHINGTON (AFP) - An international team of 121 scientists has found "record-setting" change in the Arctic linked to global warming, including melting ice, warming waters and changing wind patterns.

The 2011 Arctic Report Card, compiled by scientists from 14 countries, "shows that record-setting changes are occurring throughout the Arctic environmental system."

"Given the projection of continued global warming, it is very likely that major Arctic changes will continue in years to come, with increasing climatic, biological and social impacts," the report said.

The authors of the annual report -- first released in 2006 -- said there is now sufficient

data to indicate a "persistent decline in the thickness and summer extent of the sea ice cover, and a warmer, fresher upper ocean."

Average temperatures over much of the Arctic have risen some 2.5 degrees F (1.5 degrees C) from a 1981-2010 baseline, and the minimum area of sea ice recorded this year, in September 2011, was the second lowest since 1979.

The "profound and continuing" changes have had an uneven impact on Arctic wildlife, threatening the icy habitats of polar bears and walrus but giving whales greater access to northern feeding areas, the report said.

The warming has also caused new vegetation to sprout in many areas, and has

led to a 20 percent increase in phytoplankton, microscopic organisms that are the basis of the oceanic food chain.

The report also found that changes in Arctic winter wind patterns first detected in 2010 have continued.

"The Arctic region continues to warm, with less sea ice and greater green vegetation," said Monica Medina, of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

"Reports like this one help us to prepare for increasing demands on Arctic resources so that better decisions can be made about how to manage and protect these more valuable and increasingly available resources."

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British zoo welcomes giant pandas from China



LONDON (AFP) - Two giant pandas are set to arrive at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland on Sunday on a eagerly anticipated ten-year loan from China, agreed after years of high-level political and diplomatic negotiations.

Yang Guang (Sunshine) and Tian Tian (Sweetie) are a breeding pair and the zoo is hoping Tian Tian will give birth to cubs during her stay.

The pandas, which were both born in 2003 and have been living in Sichuan Province, will fly to Edinburgh on a Boeing 777 freighter courtesy of FedEx.

They will spend a couple of weeks settling in before being put on public display, and the zoo has already reported a huge spike in ticket sales.

Edinburgh Zoo is paying about \$1 million (750,000 euros) a year to the Chinese authorities for the pandas, the first in Britain for 17 years.

It has built two separate enclosures for the visitors, which are quite solitary, although they will be linked by a passageway dubbed the 'tunnel of love' in anticipation of their hoped-for mating.

The pandas are expected to eat 20 three-metre long bamboo stems a day between them, at a cost of up to £70,000 a year, choosing from 25 different varieties, most of them imported from the Netherlands.

As of December 16, visitors to the zoo will be able to look in on the outdoor en-

sure, while "panda-cams" placed at strategic locations will allow Internet users to watch the movements of Yang Guang during daylight hours.

"Everybody is very excited about their arrival," the zoo spokeswoman said.

Chinese ambassador Liu Xiaoming said the loan represented an important step in researching the animals, as well as an important gesture of friendship.

"Tian Tian and Yang Guang's arrival in the UK is part of a 10-year joint research programme to find out how human-bred pandas can survive in the wild," he said ahead of their arrival.

"But this is about much more than conservation. It is also about science, culture, education and above all friendship and partnership. Through these themes we expect pandas to bring China and Britain even closer together."

However, animal welfare groups have condemned the agreement.

"Wild animals suffer tremendously both physically and mentally from the frustration of life in captivity and often display neurotic behaviour such as incessant pacing, swaying, and bar-biting," said campaign group PETA.

"If the zoo were serious about helping pandas, they would be asking the public to donate to schemes that protect pandas in their native habitats."

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ACROSS

1. '70s version of Diet Coke
4. Thomas or Horace
8. Price elevation
12. Burt's costar in "The Killers"
13. Varied collection
14. Son of Zeus
15. Gym rat's top
16. Lubricates
17. Inheritance determiner
18. Foul-up
20. "2001" computer
22. Librarian's urging
25. Honking birds
29. Heavyweight champ Dempsey (1919-26)
32. Welterweight champ

Leonard

- (1979-82)
34. Ga.'s neighbor
35. Vocalist
36. Fabrication
37. Heavyweight champ Rocky (1952-56)
39. Beatty film of 1981
40. Shankar's "Concerto for"
41. Rim
43. Dem.'s foe
45. Heavyweight champ Joe (1937-49)
49. Even-tempered
52. Concept
55. FDR's "Blue Eagle"
56. Woodwind
57. Author-artist Emily
58. Beret's kin
59. Heavyweight champ

Spinks (1978)

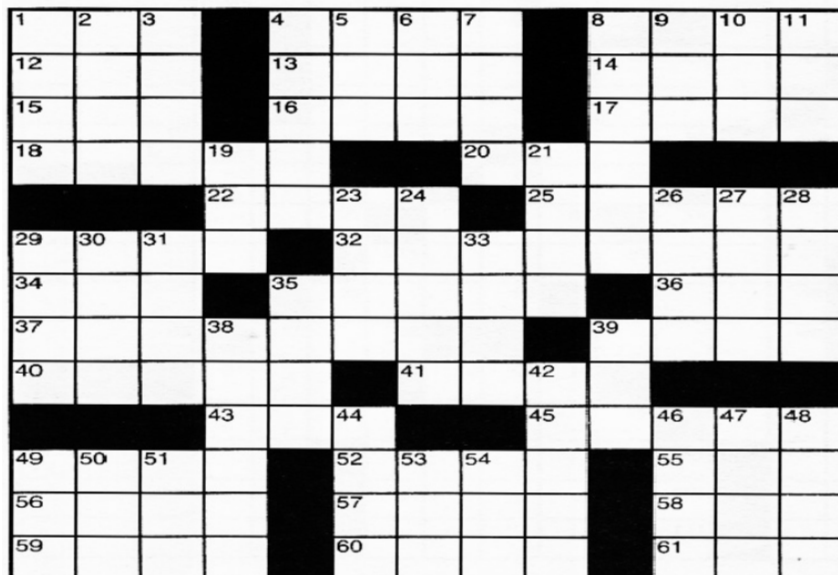
60. Gardener's sore spot
61. Till bill

DOWN

1. Heavyweight champ John (1979-80)
2. Say with conviction
3. Heavyweight champ Max (1934-35)
4. Light heavyweight champ Archie (1952-1962)
5. Heavyweight champ Muhammad (1964-67, 1974-79)
6. Nothing, to Nero
7. Snack
8. Middleweight champ Marvin

IN THE RING

- (1980)
9. Vexation
10. Heavyweight champ Norton (1978)
11. Paris-to-Zürich dir.
19. Birthplace of Mindy's pal
21. Thickening agent
23. On a cruise ship
24. "I Remember Mama" star
26. — Stanley Gardner
27. Spoke
28. Mr. Potato Head add-ons
29. Commuters' headaches
30. Jai —
31. Bad thing to put before the horse
33. Virtuous
35. Dunlop product
38. Bizet work
39. Old Olds
42. Impetus for grabbing sunglasses
44. Item in a guitar case
46. "Beautiful dreamer, wake — me..."
47. Light heavyweight champ Berkeley (1992)
48. "...bat time, — bat channel"
49. Denver's st.
50. Burrows or Vigoda
51. Bathroom, in Britain
53. Actor Haggerty
54. Prior, to Prior



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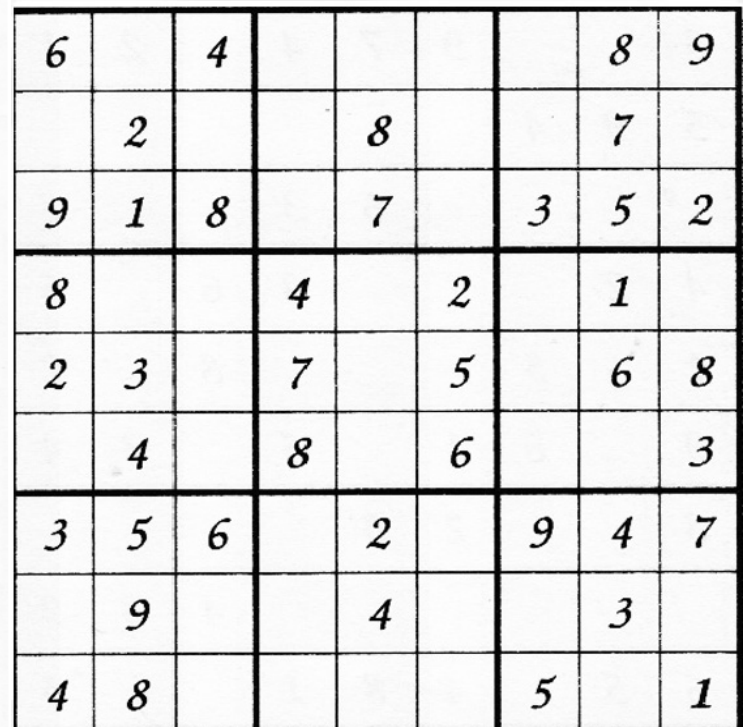
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Sudoku



SOLUTION

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	9
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	9	8
6	5	4	3	2	1	9	8	7
5	4	3	2	1	9	8	7	6
4	3	2	1	9	8	7	6	5
3	2	1	9	8	7	6	5	4
2	1	9	8	7	6	5	4	3

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Finance

France, Germany in push for 'fiscal union' to save euro

Continued from pg 1



German Chancellor Angela Merkel addresses a press conference at the Chancellery in Berlin

(AFP)-- Europe, she said, was "on the verge" of creating a "stability union", with greater budgetary discipline and checks, along with automatic punishments for countries that break the rules.

"Anyone who had said a few months ago that we, at the end of 2011, would be taking very serious and concrete steps toward a European stability union, a European fiscal union, toward introducing (budgetary) intervention in Europe would have been considered crazy," she said.

Markets welcomed the speech, with European stocks sharply higher. Paris and Frankfurt clocked weekly gains of over 10 percent on renewed optimism that leaders will get to grips with the debt crisis and moves by central banks to inject liquidity into financial markets.

Tensions on European bond markets also eased.

But despite the more sanguine atmosphere, one analyst warned of the dangers of failure.

"The main players are in overdrive to come up with a comprehensive strategy to ad-

dress the long-term issues," said Juergen Michels from Citibank.

"Market pressure is growing, and the risk of another half-baked deal would likely be more detrimental for confidence, which would have a negative impact on economic activity," he said.

IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde warned Friday that the eurozone risked having a "lost decade" if leaders did not quickly come up with convincing solution to the debt crisis.

Merkel said she would be talking to "almost everyone" in the run-up to the summit and held talks with Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann later Friday.

US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner will also travel to Europe next week for talks with authorities focused on fighting the eurozone debt crisis, the Treasury Department said.

An EU diplomat told AFP that the Brussels gathering, scheduled to run until next Friday afternoon, could well stretch into the weekend.

"What is absolutely necessary is to have a credible agreement for the EU but also for the markets, so we will not leave as long as we do not have a credible agreement," the diplomat said.

Europe's powerhouse couple, Merkel and Sarkozy, are due to meet in Paris on Monday to lay the ground for the summit and thrash out a common position on EU treaty changes.

"There is no alternative to changing the European treaties or -- this would be the second-best option -- to creat-

ing a new treaty within the eurogroup," Merkel said.

She said she was heading to Brussels "with the aim of changing the EU treaty" to push through her goals. "Rules must be respected. Respect for them must be supervised. Their violation must have consequences."

The chancellor added that the "fiscal union" should lead to a new "European debt brake" to stop countries from spending their way to the brink of insolvency.

Many European partners want to see the European Central Bank step in to buy up the bonds of distressed eurozone nations as central banks in Britain or the United States do, effectively acting as the leader of last resort.

A front-page story in Friday's Sueddeutsche Zeitung suggested that Merkel might be softening her rejection of this role for the ECB in return for stricter fiscal discipline.

"A concrete plan for treaty change, ECB intervention and then eurobonds -- that's the script for the euro endgame and the scenario which the federal government is working towards," wrote the weekly Die Zeit.

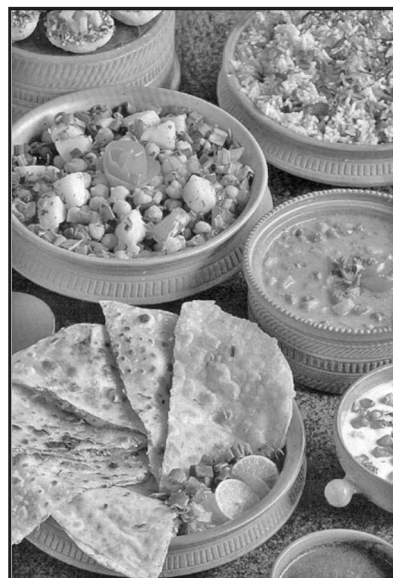
But Merkel dismissed this, stressing the ECB's independence and insisting: "The mandate of the ECB is different to that of the United States Fed or of the Bank of England," referring to the US Federal Reserve Bank.

She also reiterated that eurobonds, a pooling of the debt of eurozone nations, was not the solution now, saying anyone who thought so "had not understood the nature of the crisis".

Germany, Europe's top economy, believes that eurobonds and any compromise of ECB independence would lead to inflation, which the central bank was set up to prevent.

Speculation has also been rising that the International Monetary Fund could be the conduit for money from the ECB and other central banks that could possibly be used to shore up the finances of Europe's fiscally weak countries like Italy and Spain.

An IMF spokesman Friday mentioned central bank lending as a way to boost the Fund's depleted firepower.



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US unemployment tumbles to 8.6%, lifting hopes

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The troubled US economy and President Barack Obama's embattled administration received a substantial confidence boost on Friday, as unemployment sank to a 32-month low of 8.6 percent in November.

Official figures showed the jobless rate fell sharply from 9.0 percent the previous month, as the economy created 120,000 new jobs.

After a year that saw joblessness linger around 9.0 percent, the report was welcomed with relief.

"Woo-hoo!" said Robert Brusca, chief economist at FAO Economics. "The jobs numbers are looking better."

Analysts also pointed to upward revisions of past reports as evidence that the strength of the labor market has been understated for months.

But while the Labor Department's report was one of the strongest since the global economic crisis began in 2008, it was not uniformly positive.

Economists pointed to a worryingly sharp drop in the

number of people looking for work -- which helped push down the unemployment rate further than would have been the case.

That could mean more and more jobseekers feel defeated by the relentless slog of finding a new position and are dropping out of the hunt all together.

"The drop in the unemployment rate was caused in part by a decline in the labor force of 300,000," said Jeffrey Rosen of Briefing.com.

"If the labor force had remained at October levels, though, the unemployment rate would still have fallen to 8.8 percent."


There were other blemishes. The net creation of 120,000 jobs was not as strong as expected, as government job cuts continued to eat into private sector gains.

The net gain was below the average 131,000 of the past 12 months.

But amid renewed global turmoil, the report offered a glimmer of hope that the United States is on the way to reassuming its role as an anchor for the world economy.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer

L	I	D	N	A	M	E	N	A	N	A
E	G	O	A	R	I	A	E	L	E	M
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Current as of: 11/30/2011

Currency	Code	Buying rate banknotes	Buying Cheques	Selling Rate
U.S.A.	USD	1.77	1.78	1.80
Dutch Antilles	ANG	0.98	1.00	1.002
Canada	CAD	1.740	1.760	1.780
Britain	GBP	2.730	2.780	2.840
Switzerland	CHF	1.9482	1.9554	1.9634
Netherlands	EUR	2.3846	2.4064	2.4306
Sweden	SEK	0.2551	0.2623	0.2703
Denmark	DKK	0.3142	0.3214	0.3294
Norway	NOK	0.3002	0.3074	0.3154
Japan	JPY	226.57	228.63	230.93

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Elvis Presley's 'real daughter' sues for \$130 mn



NASHVILLE (AFP) - A Swedish woman claiming to be Elvis Presley's long-lost daughter has filed a \$130 million lawsuit against his estate and relatives for defamation and emotional distress.

Lisa Johansen, 43, claims she was the true daughter of the "King of Rock and Roll" and was forcibly exiled to Sweden after her father's 1977 death out of fears she would be kidnapped. She also says she was replaced by "imposter" Lisa Marie Presley and that the singer's wife Priscilla Presley was her mother.

Johansen ostensibly chron-

cled her journey in an autobiography, "I, Lisa Marie," but the book's publishers sued her in 2000 for refusing to take an agreed-upon DNA test.

For the past decade, Johansen has kept a low profile but a series of recent conflicts with the Presley family has brought renewed attention to her claims.

She filed a lawsuit in US District Court in Memphis, Tennessee on November 21. The suit stems from a visit Johansen made to Graceland in August with her husband and four children to commemorate the anniversary of Presley's death.

Within days of the family's visit, Presley attorney Martin Singer sent a letter to Johansen's legal representative, stating that she had engaged in "outlandish, bizarre and fraudulent conduct," by boasting to Graceland staff about her close relationship with Presley family.

Singer dismissed her

claims, saying "Lisa Johansen's strange obsession with my client's family and her outlandish claims to be the 'real' Lisa Marie Presley completely eviscerate Lisa Johansen's credibility."

During a 1992 visit to Graceland, Johansen impersonated Lisa Marie Presley, entered a private room and removed items from the property, fleeing when a security alarm went off, Singer said.

Neither Singer nor a representative of Presley's Graceland estate responded to requests for comment.

Maria Skelly, a spokeswoman for Johansen in Washington, said the Presley family has been "provocative and hostile," and engaged in an effort to "intimidate (Johansen) in order to try to make her leave and not dare come back with any kind of claims."

"She has had hopes to solve the entire situation privately within the family," Skelly said. No court date has been set.

Chilean poet Nicanor Parra wins Spanish top prize

MADRID (AFP) - Chilean poet Nicanor Parra has won the Cervantes Prize, the leading literary award for works in Spanish, Spain's culture ministry said Thursday.

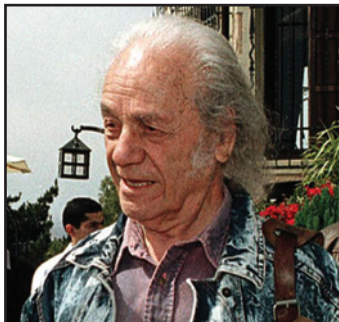
The prize honours a writer's life work and it carries with it an award of 125,000 euros (\$170,000).

It will be handed out on April 23, in recognition of the anniversary of the death in 1616 of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the author of "Don Quixote" and Spain's greatest literary figure.

The prize, which is administered by Spain's culture ministry, is traditionally granted to Spanish and Latin American authors in alternating years.

Last year's winner was Spanish novelist Ana Maria Matute, only the third woman to win the award since it was created in 1975.

Previous winners include Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, Peruvian-born Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes of Mexico.



File picture of Chilean poet Nicanor Parra during a presidential lunch on March 25, 2001 at Cerro Castillo, Vina del Mar, Chile.

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Elizabeth Taylor jewelry goes on view before sale



NEW YORK (AFP) — The legendary jewelry and fashion collections of Elizabeth Taylor, the so-called "Crown Jewels of Hollywood," went on glittering display in New York before a hotly anticipated auction.

The actress, who died in March at the age of 79, had seven husbands during her glamorous life, countless admirers and a passion for jewelry.

The exhibition at Christie's auction house in Manhattan is the last stop on a world tour highlighting Taylor's treasures and the first and last time that the entire collection is gathered in one place.

Thousands of people have already bought tickets to the 10-day public viewing, starting Saturday.

The auction will then run from December 13-16, offering pieces like the 33.19 carat "Elizabeth Taylor Diamond" given to her by husband Richard Burton in 1968, and estimated to sell for between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million dollars.

Running concurrently with the live auction at Christie's will be an Internet-only sale of nearly 1,000 items such as jewelry and accessories like

designer handbags. Christie's estimates total sales of between \$30 million and \$50 million.

Another gift from Burton was the famous "La Peregrina" pearl from the 16th century and once adorning several queens of Austria, England and Spain. It is estimated at \$2 million to \$3 million.

Hundreds of haute couture dresses from Chanel, Christian Dior, Givenchy, Valentino,



Versace or Yves Saint Laurent, jackets, caftans, handbags and other accessories are on sale and they tell both the story of the star and also the changes in fashion during her eventful career.

The dress Taylor wore to her first marriage is predicted to go for between \$40,000 and \$60,000.

"It is by far the greatest jewelry collection to be offered in a century," said Marc Porter, chairman of Christie's Americas. "There is such a depth of quality."

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December is a particularly great time to sign up to be a Cool Customer, as bonus points, which when

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Ruben Garcia and Aruba's own "Sean Kingston" – Biggy Boy, who will be launching his new CD live from Cool Casino.

The casino opens daily at 10:00 AM and on Saturdays

and Sundays, all are greeted with an early morning "Kaffie Klatch" and triple points when they use their membership cards.

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Parents Guide to Skin Protection



It's important to protect your children's skin from the damaging effects of the sun. No matter what they're doing or what time of year it is, if they are outdoors, they need to be protected.

Aruba is one of the places in the world where the sun is the strongest. Located only 12.5 degrees north of the equator, the sun shines with maximum strength and penetrates the atmosphere with a maximum amount of UV rays. What most people don't know on water and sand, which means that even in the shade you need protection.

Protecting the skin from the sun during childhood and adolescence is important in reducing cancer risks later in life. By building safe sun habits into your family's daily routine, you will make your children understand and get used to being protected against the sun and they will become more aware of the harmful effects it can have to their skin. Parents should take the lead by giving the good example; children will respond better when they see their parents protecting their skin as well.

Important recommendations:

- Wear protective clothing when out in the sun. Choose shirts and slacks made of tightly woven fabrics that you can't see through when held up to light.

- Cover up with Hats. Choose hats that shade your child's face, neck and ears.

- Apply Sunscreen every day on skin that is not protected by clothing or a hat. Choose a sunscreen with a high Sun Protection Factor (SPF) such as Aruba Aloe's Waterproof SPF 30 sunscreen for maximum protection. For babies and children under 2 years old, make sure to use a special sunscreen that gives extra protection for the sensitive skin such as "Waterproof Babies SPF 30" from Aruba Aloe. Remember to reapply after swimming, sweating or toweling dry if you use a sunscreen that is not waterproof.

- Use sunscreen even on hazy or overcast days.

- Keep an extra bottle of sunscreen in the car.

- Pack a bottle of sunscreen in your child's bag.

- Use Sunglasses that block UV rays and protect the eyes and the surrounding tender skin.

- Play in the Shade. The



sun's rays are generally strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If your children are outdoors, make sure their skin is protected.

- Teach your children the shadow rule. When outside, if your shadow is shorter than you are, it means that the sun is high in the sky and the UV rays are most intense.

- Protect children younger than 6 months of age with clothing and keep them in the shade.

For more advice on how to best protect your and your children's skin against the sun, please call Aruba Aloe: 588-3222 or visit the website www.ArubaAloe.com

Aruba Aloe products are available at most hotels, supermarkets, pharmacies and the Aruba Aloe Stores.

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SPORT

Holland, Portugal, Germany in dream Euro battle



KIEV (AFP) - Heavyweights Holland, Germany and Portugal will face off at the Euro 2012 finals with defending champions Spain tackling Italy while Friday's draw also paired England against cross-channel rivals France.

The tournament kicks off on June 8, when Poland play 2004 champions Greece at the National Stadium in Warsaw, with the final taking place at Kiev's Olympic Stadium on July 1.

Arguably the toughest pool will see the World Cup finalists Holland tackle Germany, Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal and dark-horses Denmark in group B.

"I saw all the coaches and I did not see a happy face. All four of us agree that Group B is the most difficult," said Holland coach Bert van Marwijk, whose team start against Denmark in Kharkiv on June 9.

"The advantage is that we will play three very motivated sides. I love Germany, they are great opponents, but the most important match will be the first against Denmark."

Holland were hammered 3-0 by Germany in a friendly in Hamburg last month and Van Marwijk said he is looking for-

ward to meeting Joachim Loew's team again in Kharkiv on Wednesday June 13.

Germany open their campaign against Portugal on June 9 and Loew said his team are relishing the showdown.

"We'll take it as it comes, we have no fear," said Loew. "Before the draw I said that there was no team I preferred to meet, everyone will be hard to play against."

Having lifted the Euro 2008 title in Vienna, world and European champions Spain will meet the Italians in Group C along with the Republic of Ireland and Croatia.

Ireland's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni had hoped to avoid his home country.

"Italy were the one team we wanted to avoid for many reasons. They're mentally strong and obviously I know them well," said Trapattoni.

Vincente del Bosque's Spain will tackle Italy in their opening group game in the Polish city of Gdansk on June 10.

"It is not an easy group, but neither is it impossible, we have to give respect to our rivals," said del Bosque.

"Italy are not easy opponents, they beat us in a friendly this year. Croatia, like Ireland were impressive in the play-offs, and have players at some of the best clubs in Europe."

England have been drawn in Group D with co-hosts Ukraine, Sweden and 2000 champions France.

"It's not easy," said England coach Fabio Capello. "Obviously the most difficult match is against France. We lost to them at Wembley (in a friendly last year) and they're very

good.

"I have faith in my team and my players. They're all young, I think they can give a lot."

France coach Laurent Blanc admitted he is glad Les Bleus will not have to face suspended striker Wayne Rooney, with the Manchester United star banned for all of England's Euro 2012 group matches.

He was sent off in the final qualifier against Montenegro for kicking Miodrag Dzu-dovic, but his appeal against the ban will be heard by UEFA on Thursday.

"A player of the class of Rooney, who is not in the opposing team, that is always good news," said Blanc.

Capello is hoping UEFA will show some leniency to allow the star striker to play in some of the group matches, with England set to also face Sweden in Kiev on June 15 and the Ukraine in Donetsk on June 19.

Co-hosts Poland will face Greece, Russia and the Czech Republic in Group A.

Earlier in the day, organisers insisted the tournament would be a huge success despite concerns about a lack of hotel rooms and inadequate infrastructure.

"Euro 2012 will be a resounding success, a milestone in the history of European football," declared UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino.

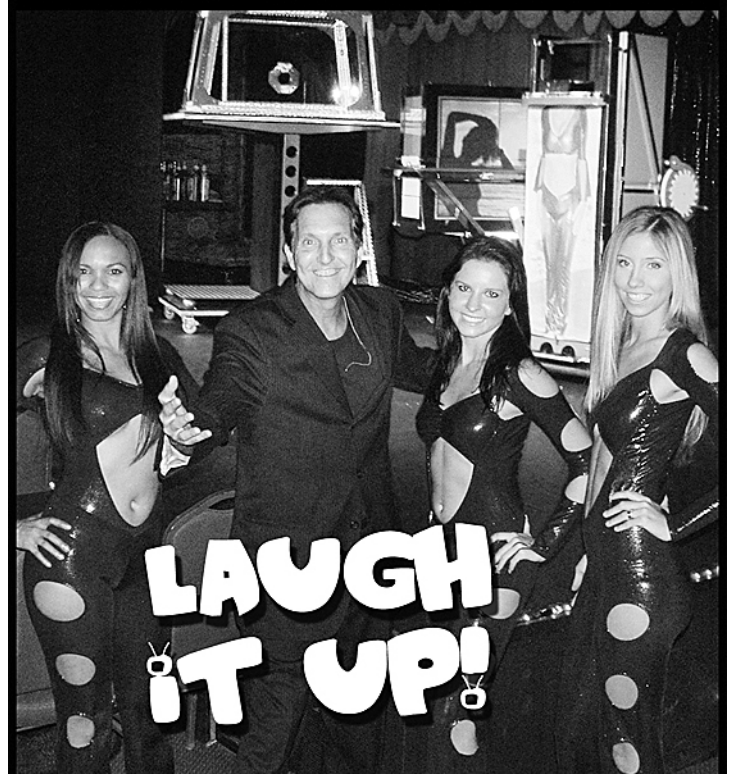
After repeated delays and spiralling costs, Ukraine has now opened the stadiums in their four host cities.

The Olympic Stadium is the most expensive jewel in the tournament's crown -- at a cost of more than \$550 million -- with completely new venues in Lviv and Donetsk to go with the refurbished stadium in Kharkiv.

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Tennis: Ruthless Rafa, epic Ferrer hand Spain Davis Cup lead

SEVILLE (AFP) - Ironman David Ferrer beat Juan Martin del Potro 6-2, 6-7 (2/7), 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 on Friday to hand Spain a 2-0 lead over Argentina in the Davis Cup final and inch them closer to a fifth title.

Ferrer needed four hours and 44 minutes to see off the battling del Potro after Rafael Nadal had earlier cruised to his 19th win in 20 rubbers in the competition with a 6-1, 6-1, 6-2 win over close friend Juan Monaco.

Spain can wrap up the title if Fernando Verdasco and Feliciano Lopez see off David Nalbandian and Eduardo Schwank in Saturday's doubles, which would leave Argentina still searching for a first Davis Cup crown.

"I played the best match of my career," said Ferrer.

The Spanish number two, who made the semi-finals at the ATP World Tour Finals last week in London, had looked down and out against a free-hitting del Potro in the second and third sets in front of a raucous 28,000-strong crowd at the Estadio Olimpico.

But the big Argentine gradually wilted, slipping 5-1 down in the decider.

He managed to retrieve a break and hold to put the pressure back on Ferrer, but the Spaniard held his nerve to wrap up the rubber with a sweeping winner.

"He's David Ferrer, he fights all the time," said Spain captain Albert Costa.

Sadly for Argentina, history is not on their side -- the last team to recover from a 2-0 deficit in the final was Australia in 1939.

Nadal may be suffering from mental and physical tiredness at the end of a gruelling season, but he repaid the faith shown in him by Costa by winning in less than two and a half hours to maintain Spain's 12-year unbeaten home record in the Davis Cup.

It was the Mallorcan's 67th best-of-five-sets match on clay, and his 66th win, with his sole defeat coming at the hands of Robin Soderling at Roland Garros in 2009.

He was far too strong for his 26th-ranked opponent, returning superbly and not facing a single break point over the course of the match.

"I played a very solid match and I am very happy with my performance," said Nadal after his 19th win in 20 singles rubbers for Spain.

His only loss came to

Czech Jiri Novak on his debut -- as a 17-year-old -- in February 2004. He is 15-0 in clay-court rubbers.

"I was very positive before the match even if there was a lot of pressure. It's an important victory. To win by such a score against a very strong player on clay is fabulous. I was sad for him as he is one of my best friends."

Nadal also praised the crowd that carried him to victory.

"I love playing at home. The atmosphere is great, it's like a football match."

Monaco saved three break points in the very first game, but was soon swept away by the six-time French Open champion.

Nadal sent down 27 winners to Monaco's 17, while the Argentine was undone by 35 unforced errors. The former world number one also won seven of 14 break points.

NBA-Players authorize

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The contests begin with the Boston Celtics visiting the New York Knicks, followed by the NBA finals rematch between the Heat and the Mavericks. The Bulls and Lakers will square off later in Los Angeles.

There were three games originally scheduled for Christmas Day but with the compressed 66-game schedule the league decided to add two more games, comprising the Oklahoma City Thunder hosting the Orlando Magic and the Golden State Warriors playing the visiting Los Angeles Clippers.



Vince Young #9 of the Philadelphia Eagles is sacked by K.J. Wright #50 of the Seattle Seahawks.

The Packers' win streak began with a 45-17 home rout of the Giants in the next-to-last week of the 2010 regular season.

The NFL week got started with the Seattle Seahawks defeating the Philadelphia Eagles 31-14 on Thursday night.

Marshawn Lynch ran for 148 yards and a pair of first-half touchdowns for the Seahawks who posted their third victory in the past four games.

The Dallas Cowboys look to win five straight for the first time in nearly four years when they visit the Arizona Cardinals on Sunday.

The Cowboys have not won five in a row since a seven-game run October 21-December 9, 2007.

While it has not always been pretty, the Cowboys have

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Brees' Saints to make Super Bowl continues from page 16

offs are the teams that get better," coach Jason Garrett said.

"We believe that if you improve over the course of the season, week-to-week, you are going to be playing well when you need to be playing really well, and that's the end of the year."

Quarterback Tony Romo said: "We needed to get going. We had some tough losses earlier in the year, and we were in position to win some games. At some point you've got to get on a roll and stack the wins together. Getting these four wins was very big."

In other games Sunday, Indianapolis is at New England, Denver at Minnesota, Atlanta at Houston, New York Jets at Washington, Kansas City at Chicago, Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, Oakland at Miami, Tennessee at Buffalo, Carolina at Tampa Bay, Baltimore at Cleveland, and St. Louis at San Francisco.

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NFL: Brees' Saints to make Super Bowl run

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The New Orleans Saints enter December eyeing a run at the Super Bowl behind the sharp passing of their star quarterback Drew Brees.

"What it comes down to is we have a lot of confidence and we play very aggressive," said Brees, whose streak of 38 straight games with a touchdown pass is second-longest in league history behind Johnny Unitas (47).

Brees is looking to lead New Orleans to a fourth consecutive victory Sunday when they host the Detroit Lions, who are fighting for a playoff spot.

To make matters worse for Detroit's postseason chances, they will likely be without star defensive end Ndamukong Suh because of suspension.

New Orleans (8-3) heads into the game after an impres-

sive 49-24 victory over the New York Giants on Monday.

Brees threw for 363 yards and four touchdowns and had an eight-yard touchdown run as the Saints finished with a whopping 577 yards. It was their second most yards in franchise history.

In another key matchup Sunday, the next stop for the Green Bay Packers in their pursuit of perfection is an opponent that has a reputation of ruining unbeaten seasons -- the New York Giants.

In a battle of teams headed in opposite directions, the Packers travel to New York to face the Giants at MetLife Stadium.

New York ended Denver's 13-0 start in 1998 although the Broncos went on to win the Super Bowl. The Giants also snapped New England's attempt at a 19-0 season with a

17-14 win in Super Bowl XLII.

"It is different circumstances but it is the challenge of playing a team that is obviously a very good football team," Giants head coach Tom Coughlin said.

Green Bay is five games away from a perfect regular season. The Packers will wrap up the NFC North title with a win and a loss by Detroit at New Orleans on Sunday.

"It is motivating to go out every week and compete better than you did the previous week," quarterback Aaron Rodgers said.

"We have been able to play the way we wanted to play consistently the first 11 games. We will see what happens when we get down this road a little bit."

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Players authorize re-forming of NBPA union - NBA

NEW YORK (AFP) - NBA players have officially reformed their union, paving the way for final approval of a deal to end a months-long lockout and launch a shortened basketball season later this month.

More than 300 players agreed on Thursday to re-appoint the National Basketball Players Association as their official union, easily surpassing the 260 signatures required.

"This is good news and completes another step in the process of finalizing our agreement," National Basketball Association (NBA) spokesman Tim Frank said.

The move paves the way for negotiations with the owners to resume, possibly on Friday, concerning some still unresolved issues in the collective bargaining agreement, including an anti-drug agreement and other contract issues.

An agreement early Saturday morning that appears set to end the lockout which began July 1 must be ratified by the owners and the players, who needed to re-establish their union in order to agree to the 10-year deal.

The hope is to complete the new collective bargaining agreement next week so both sides can ratify the agreement in time to open training camps December 9.

When talks between the players and owners broke down November 14, the NBPA disclaimed interest in representing the players, al-

lowing them to file an antitrust lawsuit against the NBA.

The players, like the NBA Board of Governors, are expected to approve the deal reached over the weekend rather than prolong the negotiations.

Under the terms of the new NBA deal, a season of 66 games per team, 16 shorter than normal, is set to begin on December 25 with the campaign stretching to late April and the NBA Finals pushed back to late June.

The NBA released the first portion of its shortened schedule Friday with the 2011-12 lockout-hit season now set to open with five games on Christmas Day.

And for the first time since the shortened 1998-99 season, the NBA champion from last year will face the runner-up team on opening day.

The NBA has made it official that Miami will visit the reigning champion Dallas Mavericks on Christmas Day. Dallas is expected to raise their championship banner before the game.

Dallas beat the Heat in six games in last season's finals, winning the championship at Miami.

With the lockout of the players by the owners partially lifted and the new collective bargaining agreement likely to be completed in the next week, the NBA announced the opening games for its abbreviated 66-game schedule.

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